



The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign

111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK
 Telephone 081 771 2904 Fax 081 653 0322 Email gn:tapol

Honorary President:
 Lord Avebury
 Honorary Treasurer:
 Tom Soper
 Organising Secretary:
 Carmel Budiardjo

Mr Nelson Mandela,
 President of the ANC,
 Pretoria
 South Africa

31 August 1994

Dear Mr Mandela,

On the eve of your visit to Indonesia, this organisation feels it has a responsibility to inform you about the grave acts of repression and persecution that have been and continue to be perpetrated by General, now President, Suharto who you will, we understand, be meeting during your visit. As a world-renowned personality who has enjoyed the benefits of international solidarity in ending South Africa's acute human rights violations and in securing your own release from political imprisonment, you will surely heed our plea that you should take the opportunity to make your views known to your Indonesian host.

We submit below a brief summary of the problems faced by the people of Indonesia and East Timor. We very much hope that you will also make public your concerns while you are still on Indonesian soil:

THE SUHARTO REGIME IS A KILLER REGIME:

1. 1965 massacre and communist and military prisoners:

General Suharto came to power in the mid-1960s in the wake of widespread killings by troops under his command that led to the deaths of as many as a million people, said to be communist suspects. Several dozen PKI prisoners are still in jail with no hope of early release. Six have been under sentence of death since the late 1960s or the early 1970s. They are all elderly and ailing; in a civilised country they would have been released on humanitarian grounds long ago. Please speak out on their behalf.

Well over one million people who were arrested in the late 1960s for alleged communist sympathies and released many years later without charge or trial, still suffer grave violations of their civil rights; their offspring are likewise discriminated against.

2. Suppression of the Acehnese liberation struggle:

Since 1989, Suharto's military forces are estimated to have killed at least 2,000 people and probably as many as 5,000 in Aceh, North Sumatra who are engaged in a bitter struggle for

their right to determine their own future.

3. Suppression of Muslim communities:

Since 1984, troops of the armed forces have suppressed Muslim communities in Tanjung Priok, Jakarta (September 1984) and in Lampung, South Sumatra (February 1987), simply because they wanted to pursue their own customs. In both cases, soldiers opened fire on large numbers of Muslims, killing an unknown number of people, estimated in each case at several hundred. All efforts at investigating these crimes and bringing those responsible to justice have failed. In 1993, troops opened fire on Muslim peasants in Madura, an island off East Java, because they were demanding decent compensation for land being taken over for a dam. Four people were killed.

4. Occupied East Timor:

Since Indonesian troops attacked and invaded East Timor in December 1975, at least 200,000 people have been killed or have died from war-related disease and starvation, a third of the population. This is proportionately one of the worst cases of genocide this century. Human rights abuses have continued unabated throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The worse tragedy in recent years was the Santa Cruz Massacre on 12 November 1991, when some 400 hundred people were killed as troops opened fire on mourners at the cemetery and then killed wounded survivors at the hospital.

The leader of CNRM, the East Timorese resistance movement, was found guilty of 'rebellion' and is now serving a 20-year sentence in Cipinang Prison, Jakarta. He was prevented by the judge from reading his defence plea in court. He is now seeking a re-trial.

The gravest violation of international law is Indonesia's extremely brutal and unlawful act of aggression against East Timor, in defiance of two UN Security Council and eight General Assembly resolutions. Bishop Belo, head of the East Timor Catholic Church, has recently said that his people are 'living in hell'. In a letter to the UN Secretary-General in June 1989 calling for a referendum, Bishop Belo said: "We are dying as a nation and a people."

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST THE INDONESIAN PEOPLE

There are political prisoners right across the political spectrum, including communists, Muslims, students and young people, and people who have stood up for their rights in land and labour disputes. The most serious violations in the past six months are as follows:

1. Suppression of Indonesia's only independent trade union:

In all sectors of life, the state allows only a single organisation to 'represent' that sector. For workers, the only trade union allowed is the SPSI, a yellow union, which sides with the employers and acts in conformity with government wishes. In 1992, an independent trade union federation was set up, known by the initials SBSI. This union, along with a number of non-governmental organisations, has succeeded in supporting or initiating labour disputes which primarily focus on demands for a rise in the appallingly low wages paid to industrial workers.

The government has refused to recognise the SBSI and recently declared it to be an 'illegal organisation'. Following a strike in Medan, North Sumatra in mid April this year, when about 50,000 workers took to the streets and were set upon by heavily armed troops, many trade union leaders and NGO activists have been arrested and are now being tried for 'incitement'. The General Chairman of the SBSI, Muchtar Pakpahan, was arrested on 13 August in Jakarta, and taken to Medan where he has been formally charged with 'incitement' and will shortly go on trial. These flagrant violations of the right to organise and the right of association have been strongly condemned by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions which has called for the immediate release of Pakpahan and his colleagues.

2. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression:

Although the 1982 Basic Press Law explicitly forbids press censorship and the banning of newspapers, the Information Minister has given himself powers to ban newspapers. Editors and journalists are constantly warned about what they may and may not publish, forcing them to operate a system of self-censorship.

Suharto said several times in the past few years that he would like to see more openness but government control has persisted. For about a year, it appeared that newspapers were being allowed greater leeway to investigate corruption and disagreements within government circles. On 21 June this year, however, at the President's behest, the country's three leading political weeklies were closed down; since then, many newspapers have received warnings that they too could be closed down. Progress towards press freedom, minuscule as it was, has been put back years.

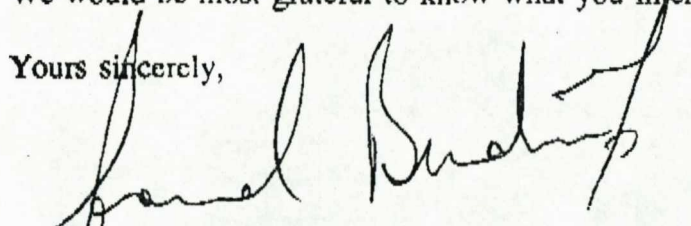
Each year, the government bans books and pamphlets; most are about political or religious affairs. Well-known poets and lecturers have been prohibited from speaking publicly and the police have closed down a number of seminars and meetings on the pretext that the conveners failed to obtain police permission for the event.

CONCLUSION

In our honest opinion, it is inappropriate for a person like yourself, for years the victim of a repressive regime, to be meeting and shaking hands with a dictator who presides over one of the world's most repressive regimes. However, at this late hour, we appeal to you to raise these issues while in Jakarta. This would help to remedy the unfortunate impression created by your visit to Jakarta.

We would be most grateful to know what you intend to do in response to these requests.

Yours sincerely,



Carmel Budiardjo